

In the Claims

Claims 1 and 19 are amended as follows.

1. (Currently amended) A proxy agent for communicating data components between a first system which supports a first protocol and a second system which supports a second protocol, said first and second protocols being mutually incompatible, the proxy agent comprising a directory for storing said data components, said directory supporting a hierarchical data structure, wherein each data component stored in said directory is associated with a first data component identifier which is compatible with said first protocol, and with a second data component identifier which is compatible with said second protocol, and wherein each stored data component is associated with a respective position in the hierarchical data structure.

2. (Original) A proxy agent as claimed in Claim 1, further including a first protocol handler arranged to communicate with said first system using said first protocol, and a second protocol handler arranged to communicate with said second system using said second protocol, wherein said first protocol handler is arranged to send data components to, and/or receive data components from, said directory using said first data component identifier, and said second protocol handler is arranged to send data components to, and/or receive data components from, said directory using said second data component identifier.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Currently amended) A proxy agent as claimed in Claim [[3]] 1, wherein said respective first data component identifiers support a hierarchical structure and serve to identify the respective position of the respective data component in the hierarchical data structure.

5. (Original) A proxy agent as claimed in Claim 4, wherein said data components are arranged into directory entities within the directory, each directory entity comprising a one or more directory entries, each directory entry comprising a respective data component, a respective first data component identifier and a respective second data component identifier.

6. (Original) A proxy agent as claimed in Claim 5, wherein each data component within a directory entity belongs to the same branch of the hierarchical data structure.
7. (Original) A proxy agent as claimed in Claim 5, wherein each directory entity is associated with a first directory entity identifier which is compatible with said first protocol and with a second identifier which is compatible with said second protocol.
8. (Original) A proxy agent as claimed in Claim 7, in which said respective first directory entity identifiers support a hierarchical structure.
9. (Original) A proxy agent as claimed in Claim 7, in which each of said first directory entity identifiers belongs to a branch of the hierarchical data structure that is one hierarchical level above the branch to which the respective data components in the respective directory entity belong.
10. (Original) A proxy agent as claimed in Claim 5, in which a respective schema is provided to define each type of directory entity and wherein a respective directory entry is created by populating a respective schema with one or more data components.
11. (Original) A proxy agent as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said first protocol supports a hierarchical data structure.
12. (Original) A proxy agent as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said first and second protocol each comprise a respective network management protocol.
13. (Original) A proxy agent as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said first protocol comprises Simple Network Management Protocol (SNMP).
14. (Original) A proxy agent as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said first system comprises a Network Management system (NMS) and said second system comprises a network element.
15. (Original) A proxy agent as claimed in Claim 14, wherein said proxy agent effects communication between said Network Management system and a plurality of network elements, at least some of said network elements supporting said second protocol.

16. (Original) A proxy agent as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said directory comprises a directory which supports Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP).

17. (Original) A network comprising a first system which supports a first protocol and a second system which supports a second protocol, said first and second protocols being mutually incompatible, and a proxy agent as claimed in Claim 1.

18. (Currently amended) A method of communicating data components between said first system which supports a first protocol and a second system which supports a second protocol, said first and second protocols being mutually incompatible, said method comprising storing said data components in a directory, said directory supporting a hierarchical data structure, wherein each data component stored in said directory is associated with a first data component identifier which is compatible with said first protocol, and with a second data component identifier which is compatible with said second protocol, and wherein each stored data component is associated with a respective position in the hierarchical data structure.

19. (Currently amended) A computer program product comprising machine-readable instructions which when executed in a computer program code for causing a cause said computer to perform the method of claim 18.